Preliminary to the First of Fifty Volumes

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Today, now that printed periodicals and newspapers have a hard time surviving competition with their digital brothers and sisters, the publication of the present issue of *Quaerendo's* volume 50, printed on paper, is as gratifying as it is memorable. On this joint achievement I congratulate both the editors and the publisher with great pleasure and, as a former managing editor closely involved in bringing about the first 41 volumes, with some pride as well.

Do these 50 annual volumes mean that *Quaerendo* has reached 'mid-life'? Hard to speculate, but apparently the proverbial 'mid-life crisis' is not yet in sight. In December last year, Senior Editor Lisa Kuitert assured me that the journal is doing 'very well', adding 'we still get a kick out of it'¹—This is good news indeed.

As the theme of this special double issue is 'innovations', it could be an ideal occasion for reminiscences about certain innovations *Quaerendo* underwent—or suffered from—during the first 41 years of its existence. This, however, would take up too many pages in view of the 50 to 1,000 words granted me. Instead, let me disclose a few particulars about what preceded the first published issue of the journal.

When *Het Boek* ceased publication in 1966, after the appearance of 37 volumes in 54 years,² its demise came at an unfortunate moment. As it happened, the Low Countries witnessed a growing interest in the history of manuscripts and books, printing, bibliography, and related fields of study in the 1960s. While important, not to say standard, works in these areas had been, or were being published,³ the University of Amsterdam housed no less than four chairs

1 E-mail from Lisa Kuitert, dated 6 December 2019.

2 See: B.P.M. Dongelmans, 'Het Boek (1912-1966)', in: *Geboekt in jaargangen. Anderhalve eeuw boekentijdschriften in Nederland* (Utrecht 1994), pp. 46-53.

3 E.g. W. Hellinga, *Copy and Print in The Netherlands. An Atlas of Historical Bibliography*. With Introductory Essays by H. de la Fontaine Verwey & G.W. Ovink, 2 vols. (Amsterdam 1962), I.H. van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse Boekhandel 1680-1725*, vols. 1-4 (Amsterdam 1960-1967)

devoted to the same subjects, held by Professors Hellinga, de la Fontaine Verwey, Ovink, and Van der Woude.⁴ These men in particular now felt the lack of a periodical in which the fruits of research—their own, their students' and that of other scholars—could be published.

Early in—or perhaps even before—1968 De la Fontaine Verwey and Ovink, both former editors of *Het Boek*, convened with Hellinga to discuss the situation. Precise knowledge about when, how, or in conjunction with whom these discussions took place, has sunk into oblivion, but there is no doubt it was these three men who finally decided to start a new quarterly.

My first indication that a new book historical journal was in the making was a passage in a letter I received in mid-September 1968 from my chief librarian, Professor Herman de la Fontaine Verwey.⁵ In it he explained the delay in answering a query I had sent him some weeks before as 'being due to the amount of work he had taken on, especially concerning the new periodical, successor to *Het Boek*'.

With other preoccupations at the time,⁶ I let this little piece of information slip my mind. However, on the morning of Friday 20 March 1970, Verwey invited me for a personal talk about *Quaerendo*, as the new publication appeared to be named.⁷ He informed me about the preliminary work done by Hellinga, Ovink and himself, and the present state of affairs. The journal would be an English-language quarterly, containing articles on such topics as manuscripts, printed books, bindings, typography, illustration, bibliophily, and libraries, all

[Vols. 5¹ & 5² (Amsterdam 1978)], W. & L. Hellinga, *The Fifteenth-Century Printing Types of the Low Countries* (Amsterdam 1966), H.D.L. Vervliet, *Sixteenth-Century Printing Types of the Low Countries* (Amsterdam 1968), L.M.J. Delaissé, *A Century of Dutch Manuscript Illumination* (Berkeley 1968), E. Cockx-Indestege & G. Glorieux, *Belgica typographica*, vol. 1 (1968), L. Voet, *The Golden Compasses*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam 1969) [Vol. 2 (Amsterdam 1972)].

4 Professor Wytze Hellinga held the chair of 'Textual Criticism and Neophilology in conjunction with applied auxiliary sciences such as codicology, analytical bibliography and the study of incunabula'; Professor Herman de la Fontaine Verwey the chair of 'History of the Book and Bibliography'; Professor G. Willem Ovink the chair of 'History and Aesthetics of Printing and Allied Techniques' and Professor Sape van der Woude the chair of 'Library Science'.

5 At his own request Professor de la Fontaine Verwey was addressed as 'Meneer Verwey' [Mr Verwey] by the University Library's personnel, students, colleagues and other acquaintances and relations in the world of books. In this article he will for brevity's sake be referred to as 'Verwey'.

6 Professor Sape van der Woude, who had succeeded Verwey as chief librarian as from 1 January 1969, had just asked me to set up and head a Rare Book Department.

7 Naming the journal 'Quaerendo' was Verwey's idea. The motto, meaning 'By searching', is derived from a printer's device used by Abraham Wolfgang, active in Amsterdam from 1658 to 1694, representing a wolf standing on his hind legs against a tree trunk, searching for honey in a bees' nest.

of which in some way related to the Low Countries. He had found his friend Nico Israel prepared, not only to publish *Quaerendo*, but also to cover all costs, including those made for translations, during the first three years.⁸ Ovink had been asked to take care of the physical presentation of the journal—typography, paper, and binding—and his proposals had met with the approval of all concerned.⁹ Following Hellinga's recommendation, David Reid MA, a lecturer at the University of Amsterdam's Department of English, had been asked, and was found willing, to do the translations.¹⁰ By dividing the fields to be covered into eleven departments, each headed by an acknowledged authority as editor, the founders hoped to ensure a regular flow of suitable copy.¹¹ These men and women, selected with the help of Herman Liebaers, director of the Royal Library at Brussels, were not only expected to read and judge submitted articles, but also to encourage other scholars to publish in the journal. In addition there was an 'Advisory Board' of 25 scholars of repute in the Low Countries' world of manuscripts and books.¹² This body was established for advisory purposes and for generating copy, but it was also intended to enhance the status of the new-born journal. The daily routine—contacts with authors, departmental editors, translators, and the publishers, receiving copy and distributing submitted articles among the Editors concerned, reading proofs and revisions, handling in- and outgoing mail, etc.—would be in the hands of four 'Managing Editors', namely Mrs Elly Cockx-Indestege, librarian at the Royal Library in Brussels, Ger Brouwer, librarian of the Netherlands Book Trade Association, Ovink, and Verwey himself. Unfortunately, Brouwer

8 From 1971 to 1979 *Quaerendo* was published by Nico Israel's firm 'Theatrum Orbis Theatrum' and from 1980 to 1982 by the firm that operated under his own name 'N. Israel'. In 1982 Nico ended his publishing enterprises and found Brill of Leiden willing to continue the publication of *Quaerendo*. From 1974 to 2003 ZWO, the Dutch Organization for Academic Research (as from 1988 named NWO, Dutch Research Council) granted an annual subsidy ranging from 9,800 to 15,000 guilders, mainly intended for translations.

9 The lettering of the front cover was hand-drawn by the graphic designer Helmut Salden, who also advised about the colours to be used.

10 David Reid had translated Hellinga's *Copy and Print*, see note 3. Cf. also Reid's obituary in *Quaerendo* 12 (1982), pp. 3-4. Other principal translators were Harry S. Lake, M.A. (as from 1973) and Anna Harvey-Simoni (as from 1982), while as from 1983 Professor Alastair Hamilton translated nearly all the articles by his friends Herman de la Fontaine Verwey and Paul Valkema Blouw.

11 The departments in question were for 'Manuscripts', 'Early printing', 'XVth-century Printing', 'XVIIth- and XVIIIth-century Printing', 'Modern Printing', 'XVth-century Humanism', 'XVIIth-century Humanism', 'Book Illustration', 'Bibliophily and bookbindings', 'History of Libraries', and 'News'. Of the appointed editors five were Belgian (one female), six Dutch.

12 Of these 13 were Belgian (2 female) and 12 Dutch (2 female).

had resigned as Managing Editor after an altercation with the Departmental Editor Hellinga and the question was now whether I would be prepared to take Brouwer's place? Realizing that many of the tasks involved could only be done in library hours, I needed the consent of the chief librarian Van der Woude before answering. Once this was given I could react affirmatively and for the following 41 years I would remain one of the managing editors.

In hindsight it has been a long period and one about which much could be told—all in all an experience I would not have missed.